UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.6/1995/L.6
22 March 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1995
Agenda item 4

PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Armenia*, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Cambodia*, Canada*, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire*, Cyprus, Czech Republic*, Denmark*, El Salvador*, Finland, Iceland*, Japan, Kenya, Liberia*, Liechtenstein*, Marshall Islands*, Micronesia (Federated States of)*, Netherlands*, New Zealand*, Nigeria*, Norway*, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea*, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Samoa*, Slovenia*, Solomon Islands*, Spain, Suriname*, Sweden*, Thailand, Turkey*, United States of America* and Venezuela: draft resolution

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

The Commission on the Status of Women recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolution:

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling Articles 1 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling also Article 8 of the Charter, which provides that the United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs,

---

* In accordance with rule 69 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

Recalling further the relevant paragraphs of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, 1/ especially paragraphs 79, 315, 356 and 358,

Recalling further the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies that have continued to focus on this area since the adoption of Assembly resolution 2715 (XXV) of 15 December 1970, in which the question of the employment of women in the Professional category was first addressed,

Concerned at the serious and continuing underrepresentation of women in the Secretariat, particularly at the higher decision-making levels,

Convinced that the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat could significantly enhance the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations, including its leadership role in advancing the status of women world wide and in promoting the full participation of women in all aspects of decision-making,

Recalling the goal, set in General Assembly resolutions 45/125 of 14 December 1990 and 45/239 C of 21 December 1990 and reaffirmed in Assembly resolutions 46/100 of 16 December 1991, 47/93 of 16 December 1992, 48/106 of 20 December 1993 and 49/167 of 23 December 1994, of a 35 per cent overall participation rate of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995,

Noting with concern that the current rate of increase in the appointment of women may not be sufficient to achieve the objective of a 35 per cent participation rate of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995,

Recalling the goal, set in General Assembly resolution 45/239 C and reaffirmed in Assembly resolutions 46/100, 47/93, 48/106 and 49/167, of a 25 per cent participation rate of women in posts at the D-1 level and above by 1995,

Noting with disappointment that the participation rate of women in posts at the D-1 level and above remains unacceptably low, and well below the 25 per cent goal,

Noting the efforts made in the past year by the Secretary-General and the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat to integrate the objectives set by the General Assembly for the improvement of the status of

---

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85/IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

women in the Secretariat into the overall strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources, and noting also that such a comprehensive approach will be conducive to enhancing the status of women in the Secretariat,

Recognizing the importance of providing equal employment opportunities for all staff,

Aware that a comprehensive policy aimed at preventing sexual harassment should be an integral part of personnel policy,

Commending the Secretary-General for his administrative instruction on procedures for dealing with cases of sexual harassment,

Bearing in mind that a visible commitment by the Secretary-General is essential to the achievement of the targets set by the General Assembly,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat 2/ while regretting the lateness in the availability of the report;

2. Also takes note of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000), 3/ as contained in the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General, and of the goals and objectives of the strategic plan as proposed by the Secretary-General;

3. Urges the Secretary-General to implement fully the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000), noting that his visible commitment is essential to the achievement of the targets set by the General Assembly and the goals and objectives contained in the strategic plan;

4. Welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to ensure implementation of the strategic plan through, inter alia, the issuance of clear and specific instructions as to the authority and responsibility of all managers in implementing the plan and the criteria by which performance will be appraised;

5. Urges the Secretary-General, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in such a way as is consistent with the strategic plan, to accord greater priority to the recruitment and promotion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts and within those parts of the United Nations system and the specialized agencies where representation of women is considerably below the average, in order to achieve the goals set in General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/239 C of an overall participation rate of 35 per cent by 1995 and in posts at the D-1 level and above of 25 per cent by 1995;

2/ A/49/587 and Corr.1.

3/ Ibid., sect. IV.

6. Also urges the Secretary-General to examine further existing work practices within the United Nations system with a view to increasing flexibility so as to remove direct or indirect discrimination against staff members with family responsibilities, including consideration of such issues as spouse employment, job-sharing, flexible working hours, child-care arrangements, career-break schemes and access to training;

7. Further urges the Secretary-General to increase the number of women employed in the Secretariat from developing countries, particularly those that are unrepresented or underrepresented, and from other countries that have a low representation of women, including countries in transition;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that equal employment opportunities exist for all staff;

9. Also requests the Secretary-General to enable, from within existing resources, the Focal Point on the Status of Women within the Secretariat to effectively monitor and facilitate progress in the implementation of the strategic plan;

10. Strongly encourages Member States to support the strategic plan and the efforts of the United Nations and the specialized agencies to increase the percentage of women in the Professional category, especially in posts at the D-1 level and above, by identifying and sending forward more women candidates, encouraging women to apply for vacant posts and creating national rosters of women candidates to be shared with the Secretariat, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions;

11. Requests the Secretary-General to further develop comprehensive policy measures aimed at the prevention of sexual harassment in the Secretariat;

12. Also requests the Secretary-General to ensure that a progress report on the status of women in the Secretariat containing, inter alia, information on activities undertaken towards the achievement of the goals and objectives contained in the strategic plan and policy measures aimed at the prevention of sexual harassment in the Secretariat is presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session, in accordance with the relevant rules concerning the timetable for delivery of documentation, and to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.6/1995/L.7
21 March 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1995
Agenda item 5

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Azerbaijan*: draft resolution

Relief to women and children who have been taken as hostages and imprisoned in armed conflicts, to be provided by the beginning of the Fourth World Conference on Women

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Taking into consideration the fact that the main objective of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing, China, from 4 to 15 September 1995, is to promote the achievement of equality, development and peace,

Expressing grave concern that the number of armed conflicts has not decreased since the end of the cold war, and that international and ethnic conflicts are an ongoing reality in nearly every region, resulting in violations of human rights, especially those of women and children, including massive loss of life,

Noting with alarm that the humanitarian law prohibiting attacks on civilian populations is systematically ignored,

* In accordance with rule 69 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

Confirming that the taking of women and children as hostages, and their imprisonment and subjection to torture and violence are in grave contravention of human morality and all international legal norms,

Expressing its strong belief that the rapid and unconditional release of women and children by parties to conflicts will contribute greatly to achieving the above-mentioned goals of the Beijing Conference,

Noting that the implementation of this initiative would serve as strong confirmation of the effectiveness of the Conference's goal of action for equality, development and peace,

1. Strongly appeals to all parties concerned to strictly observe and respect the rules of international humanitarian law, as set out in the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 1/ and the Additional Protocols thereto, of 1977; 2/

2. Appeals to the parties to conflicts to strive for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of their differences;

3. Urges all parties to conflicts to release all women and children who have been taken as hostages and imprisoned in areas of armed conflict, before the opening of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing, China, from 4 to 15 September 1995, and thereby carry out an action for peace and justice;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to use all appropriate measures to ensure that women and children who have been imprisoned as hostages in zones of armed conflict are released by the beginning of the Beijing Conference;

5. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Fourth World Conference on Women on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution, as well as to submit a report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session, on the implementation of the present resolution.

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, Nos. 970-973.

2/ Ibid., vol. 1125, Nos. 17512 and 17513.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.6/1995/L.8
27 March 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
15 March-4 April 1995
Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Selma ASHIPALA (Namibia)

Chapter ___

ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. The Commission on the Status of Women held its thirty-ninth session at United Nations Headquarters from 15 March-4 April 1995. The Commission held __ meetings and a number of informal meetings as a Working Group of the Whole.

2. The session was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. In his statement he emphasized the importance of the thirty-ninth session of the Commission in the process of preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing. He stressed the importance of incorporating into the preparations for the Conference the results and achievements of the other United Nations Conferences. He pointed out that the Fourth World Conference on Women and all the other United Nations conferences were searching for the appropriate role of public policies, with special emphasis on the perspective of women. All those conferences had attempted to define the responsibility of all political and public actors in the emerging new paradigm for social and political processes. It was important to achieve synergy among Governments, representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to create a real civil society. Non-governmental organizations had played a crucial role in getting the issues of sustainable development, civil society and participatory democracy on the

global agenda. He also addressed the vital role of women in development and negative consequences of prevailing gender inequality for any society.

3. In her opening statement, the Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women stressed that the preparatory process at the national and regional levels had proceeded successfully owing to the strong involvement of Governments, international political, financial and development organizations, the private sector, academic and research institutions, donors and, especially, non-governmental organizations. All United Nations conferences had demonstrated that it was imperative to address the gender dimension in finding solutions to problems that faced the world today. In that respect the Fourth World Conference on Women would provide the opportunity for Governments to commit themselves to specific actions. It would be a forum where non-governmental organizations not only proposed solutions to women's problems, but presented women's vision of a peaceful, developed and just world.

4. The main document of the Conference - the Platform for Action - would spell out the practical steps required to bring about the necessary changes. Furthermore, the Platform for Action provided a script to each of the actors and would make them accountable to women. Accountability, she stressed, demanded the re-examination of priorities and the reallocation of resources. It entailed the enactment, review and enforcement of laws so as to afford women equal opportunities in all spheres of life, including participation in political and economic decision-making.

B. Attendance

5. The session was attended by representatives of __ States members of the Commission. Observers for other States Members of the United Nations and for non-member States, representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and observers for intergovernmental, non-governmental and other organizations also attended. A list of participants is contained in annex __ to the present report.

C. Election of officers

6. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/21, the officers elected to the Bureau of the Commission at its thirty-eighth session continued to serve as officers during the thirty-ninth session, with the exception of the Rapporteur, as Côte d'Ivoire was no longer a member of the Commission. The Bureau comprised:

Chairperson: Ms. Patricia Licuanan (Philippines)

Vice-Chairpersons: Ms. Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl (Austria)
Ms. Natalia Drozd (Belarus)
Ms. Olga Pellicer (Mexico)

Rapporteur: Ms. Selma Ashipala (Namibia)

D. Agenda and organization of work

7. At the 1st meeting, on 15 March, the Commission adopted its provisional agenda, contained in document E/CN.6/1995/1, as follows:

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace:

   (a) Preparatory activities at the national, regional and international levels;

   (b) Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

   (c) Reports from regional conferences and other international conferences;

   (d) Draft rules of procedure;

   (e) Draft Platform for Action;

   (f) Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

4. Programming and coordination matters related to the United Nations and the United Nations system.

5. Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

6. Priority themes:

   (a) Equality: Equality in economic decision-making;

   (b) Development: Promotion of literacy, education and training, including technological skills;

   (c) Peace: Women in international decision-making.

7. Provisional agenda for the fortieth session of the Commission.

8. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its thirty-ninth session.

8. Also at the 1st meeting, the Commission approved the proposed organization of work for the session (E/CN.6/1995/L.2), as well as the proposal of the Bureau to take up the priority themes (item 6) during the discussion of the draft Platform for Action (item 3 (e)).

9. At the same meeting, the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission, Ms. Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl (Austria) was appointed Chairperson of the Informal Working Group of the Whole to work on the draft Platform for Action, as well as other matters related to the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

E. Friends of the Rapporteur

10. At the 1st meeting, on 15 March, the Commission decided to establish an informal group of Friends of the Rapporteur, nominated by the regional groups, to assist the Rapporteur in completing the report of the Commission at its thirty-ninth session.

Kathleen Townsend (Australia)

Sharon Brennen-Maylock (Bahamas)

Manuela Rosa (Guinea-Bissau)

Jaroslaw Strejczek (Poland)

F. Participation of intergovernmental organizations in the work of the Commission

11. At the 1st meeting, on 15 March, the Commission agreed to grant observer status to the intergovernmental organizations listed in paragraph 2 of document E/CN.6/1995/L.5, as well as to the two entities listed in paragraph 3 thereof, on the understanding that they be placed in a separate category.

G. Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

12. At its 1st meeting, on 15 March, the Commission approved ad referendum the list of non-governmental organizations contained in document E/CN.6/1995/L.4 and Add.1-3.

13. At the 6th meeting, on 20 March, the Commission adopted the list of non-governmental organizations contained in document E/CN.6/1995/L.4 and Add.1-3.

14. At the same meeting the observer of the Holy See requested that the following statement be reflected in the report:

[Statement to be attached]

15. At the ___ meeting, on __ March, the Commission decided to

H. Consultations with non-governmental organizations

16. Written statements submitted by non-governmental organizations in accordance with rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (E/5975/Rev.1) are listed in annex __ to the present report.

I. Appointment of the members of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women

17. At the 1st meeting, on 15 March, the Commission decided to establish a Working Group to consider, under agenda item 5, communications regarding the status of women, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/27. The following five members, nominated by their regional groups, were appointed:

Ljudmila-Bozhkova (Bulgaria)

Feng Cui (China)

Clara Inés Vargas (Colombia)

Regina Tavares da Silva (Portugal)

Wahid Ben Amor (Tunisia)

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.6/1995/L.8/Add.1
27 March 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
15 March-4 April 1995
Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Selma ASHIPALA (Namibia)

Chapter ____

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

1. The Commission considered item 3 of its agenda at its ____ to ____ meetings, from 15 to 20 March 1995. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General containing the revised draft of the Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1995/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1995/3 and Add.1-10);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/CN.6/1995/4);

(d) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the results of the regional conferences and other international conferences (E/CN.6/1995/5 and Add.1-7);

(e) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting a study on technical and financial cooperation programmes targeting women (E/CN.6/1995/6);

(f) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the draft rules of procedure of the Conference (E/CN.6/1994/L.3);

(g) Report of the Secretary-General on the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/49/378).

The report of the Secretary-General on the proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/49/217-E/1994/103) was made available to the Commission.

2. In introducing the item, the Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women said that the success of the Conference would completely depend on the work done during the thirty-ninth session. The preparatory process at the international, regional and national levels was proceeding well and involved a large number of different activities that examined the key issues of the advancement of women, including significant mobilization of research and policy analysis. The 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women formed the conceptual and factual basis for the Platform for Action. She emphasized that the Platform for Action should be built on the results achieved during the regional and United Nations conferences and should meet the needs of all women in the world.

3. In her statement, the Governor-General of Barbados and convener of the NGO Forum at the Nairobi Conference, stressed that women should demonstrate to the whole world a new form of policy-making based on dialogue. She emphasized the importance of cooperation among Governments and non-governmental organizations. The forthcoming NGO Forum would be historic in its level of participation and in the commitment of those involved. Referring to the Platform for Action, she urged that special attention be paid to the paramount issue of peace.

4. Many representatives emphasized that the Fourth World Conference on Women should promote a new vision of development based on women's reality and rights and should be implemented in the spirit of solidarity between women and men, between nations and between present and future generations.

5. It should be a "Conference of Commitments" and the outcome of the Conference should be as practical and focused as possible. Efforts should be made to ensure that adequate resources, processes and mechanisms were put in place for the accountability and implementation of that new vision. It was emphasized that at Beijing, besides trying to create equality between men and women in a given world, it would be necessary to question the situation of that world itself and examine the processes and systems that were simultaneously producing new patterns of poverty and wealth. In that context, the need for consolidation and building of new bases of solidarity for international women's movements and the creation of new partnerships with Governments and civil societies was stressed.

6. Many representatives said that the Fourth World Conference on Women would be an opportunity to take stock of the policies, programmes and measures devised for achieving women's advancement in the 50 years of the existence of the United

Nations and also to assess gains and failures. One representative suggested that the Conference should not be just a conference to reiterate commitments but to carry them forward. Some representatives suggested that the Fourth World Conference on Women should set standards for the first decade of the twenty-first century, against which the performance of the international community and national actions would be judged. Therefore, it was imperative to be successful in consensus-building for setting progressive, innovative and forward-looking standards for Governments and the international community, centred on the United Nations system.

(a) Preparatory activities at the national, regional and international levels

7. Most representatives expressed the view that the preparatory activities had been successful and noteworthy at all levels and particularly commended the work of non-governmental organizations. The preparations at the national level had been coordinated by National Committees composed of governmental and non-governmental institutions. Some representatives pointed out that the preparatory process, including the informal consultations held, had contributed to increasing awareness-raising at all levels and to enriching the Platform for Action. A few participants were of the view that the preparatory activities had given rise to intense communication and interaction among women as well as between all the sectors of society. In one country, consensus had been reached on actual and future challenges, as well as on actions to be taken. One representative highlighted the transparency and consultation of the preparatory process and said that a wealth of material had been obtained, on the basis of which the country position could be finalized.

8. In the context of the preparations for the Conference, one representative advised the Commission that efforts were being made with respect to the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

9. Some representatives reported on national activities that addressed the critical areas of concern. One representative reported on efforts of the Government to assist women victims of war and violence and about plans to conduct a national seminar that would address affirmative action with respect to the status of women. Another representative provided information on a variety of programmes undertaken by the Government and non-governmental organizations to improve the status of women. One representative reported on workshops on women's participation and statistics and on the utilization of the mass media to promote public information. One representative informed the Commission that training activities have been developed, with special emphasis on the catalytic role of the Government and the need for the participation of all sectors.

10. Many representatives reported on the participation of their countries in the regional preparatory conferences. They expressed their support for the regional platforms of action. References were made to the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe at Vienna and to the Conference on Equality and Democracy: Utopia and Challenge, organized by the Council of Europe at Strasbourg.

11. Some representatives reported on the subregional meetings organized in preparation for the regional preparatory meetings and the adoption of subregional platforms for action. One representative informed the Commission of the upcoming Caribbean subregional meeting to finalize preparations for the Conference.

12. In a joint statement, United Nations agencies advised the Commission about their activities in preparation for Beijing, emphasizing that acting in a coordinating way facilitated the realization of the Women in Development/gender mandates.

13. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Public Policy spoke about the preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the special importance of women's contribution being reflected therein.

(b) Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

14. Many representatives stated that the principle of equality was embodied in their constitutions and in the Charter of the United Nations. Reference was made to the existing international legal instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to the various institutional, legal measures at the national level that were being taken to translate the principle of equality into reality. However, despite notable progress in the advancement of women in societies the world over, much remained to be done before the international community could claim that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women had been implemented in full.

15. Although some representatives stated that the participation of women in decision-making bodies at the national level had increased, many representatives stressed that women were still far from reaching equal power and that more radical policy interventions and strong political will would be required to bring about immediate changes, including changes in the structure and cultures of institutions. Women's participation in decision-making was a prerequisite for democracy that should be practised at all levels, from grass-roots to top decision-making in both the private and public spheres. Some representatives expressed similar concerns regarding international institutions and decision-making, including the United Nations system.

16. Many representatives stated that despite increased participation of women in the labour force, women were still clustered in low-paid, low-skilled jobs and that discrimination against women in remuneration and promotion continued. A few representatives mentioned improvements in the areas of education and health. Many representatives referred to persistent discrimination against women and their lack of access to proper nutrition, clean drinking water, health, education, social support services and decent housing. Many representatives referred to women's insufficient access to productive resources such as land, capital and technology.

17. Some representatives stressed the negative impact of the continuing recession in many economies on women. Some representatives referred to the

increasing burden of debt and its adverse effects on women and overall national development programmes. It was stated that structural adjustment programmes had negatively affected the quality of life of women, particularly rural women. A few representatives mentioned the widening North-South gap and the extremely disadvantageous position of the least developed countries. One representative provided information on the main priorities for women in the least developed countries established at the meeting on women in development in the least developed countries, held in Niger in 1995.

18. Many representatives referred to education as a critical factor for the advancement of women, emphasizing the importance of education for girls.

19. Some representatives emphasized the importance of the family and the role of women as pillars of the family. One representative expressed concern that while achieving equality between men and women was essential, it should not deprive women of their femininity and their role as mothers. It was maintained that both men and women should be treated equally, with dignity as human beings and that the contribution of social reproduction to development should be duly recognized.

20. A few representatives stressed the importance of women's reproductive rights; they referred to their activities and the measures taken to improve women's reproductive health. Some representatives mentioned the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS as a grave threat to women's health.

21. It was emphasized that sex-based discrimination was closely linked to culture and tradition. Reference was made to fundamentalist movements, religious extremism and ethnic fanaticism, which were said to adversely affect women's status in society. Another representative voiced concern about the "negative side of culture", which was often used to legitimize oppression of women in the family and society. It was suggested that that issue should be given due attention in the context of national and international programmes. One representative referred to cultures and the rights of indigenous people and the difficulty of integrating them.

22. Many representatives referred to the adverse effects of the lack of peace and security on women, particularly in situations of civil strife and armed conflict. In that context, the waste of resources due to increased military spending was emphasized. One representative referred to the holistic approach to security, taking into account basic developmental needs, as well as the need for political security, including respect for human rights. A few representatives stressed that women should unite more effectively and put a stop to ongoing wars, the production and development of weapons, arms trafficking and mindless destruction.

23. Many representatives commented on the violation of international legal, humanitarian and ethical standards, which adversely affected refugee and displaced women in situations of armed conflict. A few referred to rape being used as a tool of war. Some representatives referred to the worsening of socio-economic conditions and the feminization of poverty due to armed conflict and civil wars.

24. One representative reported on the meeting organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross to analyse the measures to be taken for ensuring the protection of women and children against the violation of international humanitarian laws.

25. Many representatives referred to the prevailing violence against women, in the family, society and in circumstances of war and armed conflict. They reported on means and measures to eradicate violence against women in all its forms and to provide assistance to the victims, and stressed the need for concerted international action in that respect. A few representatives raised the issue of new forms of violence emerging from terrorism.

26. Many representatives said that the human rights of women were insufficiently protected. Some stressed the importance of the principle of equality, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as the basis for international protection of women. Some representatives reported on efforts being made in their countries to reform national laws in compliance with international legal standards. It was stressed that the human rights of women should be respected in all spheres of life, including social and cultural rights, which constitute an integral part of universal human rights. One representative referred to the difficulties of transition from the customary to the modern legal framework. Although the advantage of the modern legal system was recognized, the necessity of protecting women in customary ways during the transition period was emphasized. Many representatives stressed the importance of legal literacy of women and the practical application of their rights.

27. Many representatives referred to the insufficiency of gender disaggregated data.

28. A non-governmental organization said that the current imbalance in women's access to various sports had been pointed out at a conference on women and sports, held in 1994, at which strategies to increase women's participation in sports had been adopted. The representative urged that the Platform for Action addressed barriers to women's equal participation in sports.

(c) Reports from regional conferences and other international conferences

29. The representatives of the regional commissions (the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) reported on the preparatory activities for the Fourth World Conference on Women, including regional conferences. All representatives commented on the wide participation in the regional conferences of intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, women's organizations and the United Nations system, including the regional commissions. They highlighted the process of consensus-building around regional critical areas of concern, leading to the adoption of regional platforms for action. The process was considered dynamic given the diversity and cultural pluralism among countries. Each representative acknowledged the contribution of various meetings at the subregional and national levels during the preparatory phase, including various youth meetings, artistic performances and fairs and other initiatives of civil society. All representatives stated

that specific follow-up activities were being planned for the implementation of regional plans of action.

30. One representative reported on the Regional Conference on Intra-Familial Violence which took place at Phnom Penh in December 1994.

31. References were made to the achievements of the international conferences in Mexico and Copenhagen.

(d) Draft rules of procedure

(e) Draft Platform for Action

32. Many representatives commended the draft Platform for Action as comprehensive and providing the basis for further discussion. Some representatives found it too extensive and detailed, as well as weak regarding content analysis and consistency in the critical areas of concern. Many representatives suggested that it should reflect reality and sensitivity to common global problems and in a balanced way embody regional diversity - without, however, duplicating the regional platforms for action.

33. Many representatives urged that the Platform for Action should reflect the many important and hard-won gains that were achieved in other United Nations world conferences - issues related to human rights; the commitment of the International Conference on Population and Development to the empowerment of women and women's health and reproductive rights; and the reaffirmation at the World Summit for Social Development that equality between men and women was crucial to the attainment of social and economic development. The key outcomes of those conferences should be used as the starting-point for the elaboration of further action on the Platform for Action.

34. Many representatives stressed that while the Platform for Action defined the mission and critical areas of concern as well as the global framework, the document lacked the punch and the vision that could only be provided with dramatic impact by a well-constructed declaration. Such a declaration should be brief, all-encompassing and with vision. One representative suggested that the declaration should be political and future-oriented, while another representative strongly urged that it should voice the commitment of Governments. Some representatives were of the view that the declaration should include the main proposals for action agreed upon in the Platform for Action.

35. Many representatives stressed that the Platform for Action should lead to the empowerment of women and embody actions that enabled women to participate fully in all spheres of life and to be involved in the decisions that affected them. The economic independence of women, as well as equality, provided the environment for the realization of women's full potential, individually and

collectively. The progress of humanity and the modernization of societies depended on the new role played by women. In that respect, greater prominence should be given to the need for the integration of gender impact analyses in policy-making and programme planning as a central approach to achieving equality. One representative suggested that the Platform for Action should be considered an agenda for equality.

36. Many representatives emphasized that the Platform for Action should focus on measures that could be realistically implemented in the immediate future. That would, of necessity, lead to an examination of institutional mechanisms both nationally and internationally, while avoiding proliferation and duplication of mechanisms. Some representatives reaffirmed the need to create national machineries, or reinforce existing ones by increasing the financial and human resources required. One representative stressed the importance of establishing appropriate mechanisms for promoting international cooperation. One representative said that the advancement of women was necessary for the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system.

37. Many representatives emphasized the need for more clarity in defining the various responsible actors, and called for integrated efforts among Governments, the international community and non-governmental organizations.

38. One representative addressed the issue of institutional arrangements, particularly in reference to the proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. It was suggested that the issue should be deliberated at length during the present session in the context of the overall restructuring of the United Nations system and the placement of women's issues within United Nations structures.

39. A few representatives referred to the mission statement, which should identify the relationship between the Platform for Action and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

40. Some representatives referred to an imbalance among the different chapters of the Platform for Action and suggested that they should be elaborated further. One representative emphasized the importance of setting specific and globally quantifiable targets in all areas of concern.

41. Many representatives stated that the areas of decision-making, the human rights of women, women in the economy, violence against women, the burden of poverty, women's unpaid work, a life-cycle approach to health and education, and environmental issues should be given particular importance. Many representatives referred to particular issues that should be more strongly reflected in the Platform for Action, such as the impact of structural adjustment programmes, the situation of various groups of women including refugees, migrant women, indigenous women and women with disabilities. One representative suggested that special emphasis should be given to the problems faced by vulnerable women and include a definition of vulnerable women at the beginning of the document.

42. Many representatives referred to the concerns and needs of the girl child. Several representatives suggested a separate area of concern on that issue.

43. One representative suggested that the Platform for Action should address religious extremism as harmful to women's advancement and as specifically targeting women.

44. Many representatives referred to violence against women as one of the most critical issues that affected women, in both public and private life. It was stressed that the paragraphs concerning violence against women should comply with the texts of other recent United Nations documents, and in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly.

45. Many representatives said that the feminization of poverty was taking place in both developed and developing countries and suggested that that section needed more extensive elaboration, specifying priority objectives.

(f) Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

46. Many representatives emphasized that adequate financial resources and political commitments would be crucial for the implementation of the Platform for Action. In that respect, serious discussions should be held to estimate the cost and to mobilize resources. Many representatives considered that it was essential to look into the special needs of developing countries and the extra funding needed for implementing measures if the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action were to be addressed effectively. A few representatives stated that donor countries had a specific role to play in implementing the decisions of the Conference with respect to development cooperation.

47. As lack of access to higher education was cited as one of the main reasons for the low representation of women in decision-making at all levels, one representative proposed the creation of a "fund for women in university" to lend money to qualified women to achieve higher education.

48. Many representatives emphasized the importance of women's concerns being fully integrated into all United Nations activities and structures. In that respect, the process of United Nations restructuring should be kept open and transparent. The serious underrepresentation of women in the Secretariat, especially at the senior level, should be of concern to Governments.

49. A few representatives described specific activities and seminars that were being planned as a follow-up to the Conference. Among them were the creation of a centre for women and the sponsoring of an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1995. Some representatives said they were preparing national programmes for action and had set up sectoral committees with governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure effective follow-up to the Conference.

50. A few representatives referred to the interest of their Governments in setting up an international centre for non-governmental organizations from Central and Eastern European countries.

51. One representative raised the question of whether the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was sufficiently effective to safeguard individual women against gender discrimination and called for the endorsement of the proposal for an optional protocol, as agreed upon at the European regional preparatory meeting. Another representative considered it important that all countries ratify the Convention without reservations, as well as all the other international instruments for the protection of human rights.

52. United Nations agencies emphasized the importance of inter-agency cooperation in the implementation of the declarations and programmes of action adopted at United Nations world conferences. Therefore, in order to ensure complementarity and synergy in the implementation of the Platform for Action, an inter-agency mechanism should be established.

53. United Nations agencies reiterated their commitment to contribute to the implementation of the Platform for Action in accordance with their respective mandates. Many agencies referred to specific objectives and actions in which they had a comparative advantage to assist with future follow-up activities. Some of the noteworthy proposals included: analytical work on policy and strategic issues concerning women's participation in the economy, especially through increased access to resources so as to benefit from mainstream industrial development processes and the labour market in general; further strengthening databases, including the development of methods and statistics for further gender analysis and conducting and disseminating policy-oriented gender research.

54. In order to highlight the key role of education for the advancement of girls and women, a proposal was made to celebrate international literacy day at Beijing. The role of the mass communication media in promoting gender equality and women's active participation in development was stressed.

55. Many representatives of various non-governmental organizations addressed the issues regarding the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women and made their comments on the Platform for Action.